

CHALLENGE



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Back the Bus Strikers!

Fight for Job Security vs. Billionaire Mayor

NEW YORK CITY, January 25 — “We are not going to back down or give up! We will see this thing through to the end!” exclaimed a striker as school bus drivers and matrons continued to brave the freezing cold on the picket lines. The spirit and militancy of the workers are unmistakable. They see clearly what they’re up against and are determined to stand up to billionaire Mayor Bloomberg and the bosses who are trying to void the job security provisions in their contract, won by a strike in the 1970s. They hail from all over the world, including Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. Many have a deep understanding that workers need to fight back.

Almost every worker on the picket line will agree that while they might have seen a strike as a last resort, now that it’s on, they’re in it to win it! At one of the major sites, cars and trucks are honking all day in support as workers from local stores brought coffee to the workers. The weather has become dangerously cold, but the struggle continues!

The Bosses’ Media Lies

The media, including the liberal New York Times, has vilified them, portraying them as lazy or uncaring.



A Times editorial (1/22) applauded Bloomberg’s declaration “that the next round of contracts...will not include job security,” which the billion-dollar Times corporation says is a good thing. The NY Post ran a front-page article attacking the strikers with the headline “BUS TARDS!” They’ve been bashing the strikers by spreading a big lie that “greedy” union workers cause the big difference in cost between workers here and those in other cities. While there may be differences in pay rates, the really big difference in cost results from the “no-bid” contracts billionaire Bloomberg has handed out to “connected” bus companies. These contracts often serve only a few students and cost the city more.

Bloomberg is giving a weekend crash course to train scabs to break the strike. He is ready to sacrifice safety by replacing drivers and matrons with decades of experience in helping children with special needs.

The other big lie is that these workers don’t care about the students. Nothing could be farther from the truth! In fact, much of the discussion on the line is about how various students are doing.

PLP Welcome Here

PLP members have been greeted

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More Cannon Fodder for Pentagon

Obama ‘Frees’ Women for Imperialist War

Liberals are celebrating President Barack Obama’s lifting of the ban on women in combat as a “triumph for equality” (New York Times editorial, 1/25/13). But the reality is just the opposite. Obama’s move is actually aimed at strengthening U.S. imperialism, which depends for its existence on racist and sexist exploitation and Pentagon-planned mass murder. Putting women on the front lines expands the war-makers’ supply of working-class cannon fodder. And it builds nationalistic support for a war machine that now pretends — as the Times deceitfully claims — to honor “fairness and equal opportunity.”

The U.S. ruling class wants people to buy the illusion that capitalism can defeat sexism. In fact, capitalism is the root cause of sexism. The interconnection between the two can be seen on several levels:

Given the fact that 75 percent of the victims of U.S. imperialist wars are civilians, women in combat — soon

to be full-fledged members of the war machine — will take a lead role in the mass killing and brutalization of other women. Exhibit A is ex-General Janis Karpinski, the first woman to lead U.S. troops in a combat zone. She was the commander of 17 Iraqi prisons, including the infamous Abu Ghraib, where both female and male prisoners were routinely tortured and abused by male and female soldiers.

The rulers are using Obama’s initiative to mask the historical truth that women are victimized by the special oppression of capitalism. Women are disproportionately among the most poverty-stricken workers. They generally get paid lower wages — or none at all in raising children as the next generation of future workers for the bosses to exploit. Bill Clinton’s vicious welfare reform threw hundreds of thousands of women and their children into poverty and homelessness.

Black, Latino and Asian women suffer from triple oppression: as workers, as women and as victims of racist discrimination. These workers are mercilessly exploited and even burnt alive in the garment factories of Bangladesh (see pag 8).

Capitalist culture degrades women as sexual objects and leads to violent physical attacks and sexual harassment in the streets, on the job and in the home. Masses of women in India are taking to the streets to fight capitalist culture and its justification of rape in what the U.S. media refers to as “the world’s largest democracy.”

But the U.S. military is no slouch itself when it comes to rape. Obama’s War Secretary, Leon Panetta, admitted that one in three women “will experience sexual assault” during their stint in the armed forces (British Guardian, 1/24). Given that 200,000 women are on active duty, the number of victims would exceed sixty thousand.

These attacks on women would be no isolated incidents. They are a symptom of the intrinsic sexism in the military, which stems from the sexist nature of capitalism — a system breeding the oppression of women and the gendered division of workers. Workers, women and men, must fight these assaults with a vision to win all workers to communism.

Equal Opportunity Genocide

Obama’s ploy supports the capitalist myth that integrating the power structure is progressive. Again, the opposite is true. Ending the combat exclusion will enable Annapolis- and West Point-trained female officers to rise higher in missions for mass killing. In the future, women will command more than fighter jets. They will run entire genocidal invasions on behalf of U.S. imperialism.

Obama’s apologists assert that putting more women in charge will somehow curb rampant sexual assaults within the ranks: “Allowing women to get the benefits of serving in combat positions...might make things better because it will mean more women at the top of the military, and that, inevitably, will mean more attention to women’s issues” (NYT, 1/24/13). But at its core, the military’s rape scandal stems from its own glorification of violence and the profit system’s exploitation and degradation of women in general.

Contrast Obama’s “triumph for equality” for women with his military surge in Afghanistan and his use of remote-control drone warfare, together responsible for the deaths of hundreds — if not thousands — of women and their children. Weigh it against Obama’s mass detention and record deportation of undocumented women, ripping them away from their children. This is fascism in action, and women are among its most vulnerable targets.

Pentagon Troop Shortage? Enter Women

The continuing instability in Iraq and Afghanistan reveals that U.S. forces, however lethal, are not yet large enough to control even mid-sized countries. U.S.

rulers hope that widening women’s combat roles will open the door to bringing back the draft — this time for both sexes. “The Pentagon’s decision...is expected to reopen a legal debate: Should women have to register with the government so it knows where to find them in the event of a new draft?” (Washington Post, 1/27/13).

Liberal Congressman Charles Rangel of Harlem is once again touting his Universal National Service Act, “known as the ‘draft’ bill, which requires all men and women between ages 18 and 25 to give two years of service in any capacity that promotes our national defense” (CNN, 1/ 26/13).

With respect to current and future foes, U.S. rulers have technologically superior arms but numerically insufficient armies. The administrations of Clinton, Obama and the two Bushes killed millions of Iraqis and Afghans with invasions and sanctions. But in the absence of a full-blown U.S. occupation, Iraq’s Iran-leaning Maliki regime is hindering what Exxon Mobil views as its right to dominate the country’s oil production. And as Taliban attacks mount in Afghanistan amid a dwindling U.S. presence, the U.S.-backed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas super-pipeline remains a pipedream.

Economic Draft Won’t Cut It

Less than 1 percent of the U.S. population — mostly unemployed youth unable to find jobs — now “volunteers” for service. U.S. rulers know that confronting Iran and planning for a potential world war with China will require vastly greater numbers of recruits. Obama & Co. are not counting on legions of newly empowered GI Janes to willingly rush to imperialism’s rescue. What they’re really planning is a doubling of the draft pool, an item long on the bosses’ agenda. General Willard Paul, the Army’s World War II manpower czar, foresaw a global postwar clash between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. In 1947 he asked Congress to create a permanent women’s military corps in all service branches: “We must have the full use of the total personnel of the nation.”

Yes, working-class women *do* belong in combat — when the fight is against capitalism. Millions of heroic women, both communist-inspired Soviet soldiers and underground partisans across Europe, helped crush Hitler’s Nazis. Millions more women were essential to the Chinese communists’ fight against the Japanese fascists and the Vietnamese defeat of the U.S. invasion. Though the communist parties of these periods had weaknesses in both theory and practice that eventually led them to restore capitalism, these women’s titanic achievements still stand as a beacon for workers throughout the world.

A Mass Party for Working-Class Emancipation

Our struggle today is not against our class sisters and brothers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran or China, whom Obama and the bosses behind him want us to slaughter. Instead, our fight must be waged against the profiteers and politicians who would lead us into killing and dying. Their goal is to maintain their profit system and dominate the world’s resources. The principal means to their end is the exploitation of the world’s workers, women and men both.

In working toward the inevitably violent overthrow of the war-for-profit ruling class, the Progressive Labor Party strives for the absolute equality of women and men. Once capitalism is destroyed and replaced by a communist society, run by and for the working class, we will be able to eliminate the sexism and racism that stem from the profit system. Production and distribution according to need — without bosses and their exploitation — will achieve a true “triumph of equality.”☺



OUR FIGHT

- ★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.
- ★Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.
- ★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.
- ★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.
- ★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society’s benefits and burdens.
- ★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit black, Latino, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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Why Articles Are Not Signed

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual. While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

Communist School Points Way to Red Future

BROOKLYN, NY, January 18 — This past weekend, teachers and students gathered together for PL's annual winter Communist School. The purpose of the School is to help current and future members understand how PLP can fight against capitalism to win a better world.

On Friday, the first day of the School, participants viewed a screening of "The Central Park Five," a film about racist police intimidation and arrest. It documents the story of five black teenagers who were falsely arrested for raping a white woman in 1989. Although there was not a shred of evidence against them, the cops used physical and psyschological abuse and the prosecution pushed through with false testimony and threw the kids in jail.

'Can the Police Really Do This?'

One of the Central Park Five, Yusef Salaam, was there to answer questions regarding his trial and time in jail. Most of the students expressed shock and disbelief at the film. A student from Brooklyn Technical High School asked "is this really possible? Can the police really do this?" The reality of racist policing came as a surprise to most of the students, who have not had to come face-to-face with the cops just yet as the hundreds of thousands of stop-and-frisk victims of police terror have.

Shantel Davis's family was also at the screening. The tragedy of this young woman, who was murdered by the police on June 14, 2012, is ultimately a continuation of the ordeal brother Salaam went through 24 years ago. The film exposes the truth about how the police function in our society: a force that keeps the working class — particularly black, Latino, and immigrant youth — submissive and docile. As

Standardized testing also acts as a way to maintain ideological control of the student body.

part of our anti-police murder campaign, this film was crucial in bringing students to our side.

The next day we gathered for a study group on the state of public education under capitalism today. Students and teachers alike shared stories about layoffs and cuts, the harms of standardized testing and the massive policing of our schools. We discussed how testing acted as an obstacle for working-class students on the way to a high school diploma. One student mentioned that he's failed the trigonometry exam, putting his graduation in jeopardy even though he has already been accepted to a four-year university. Another student explained that while she understands the material she's taught, the pressure and time constraints of the tests don't allow her to express that.

The Blame Game

Standardized testing is a rulers' tool to use in the blame game. "Poor test scores" are the cause of student failures, teacher firings and school

closings. When these events happen, everyone starts pointing fingers at each other. The parents turn against the teachers, blaming them for not putting enough effort or not teaching the kids correctly. Teachers are convinced parents are to blame, citing problems at home for widespread letdowns. This keeps the students, teachers and parents at odds with each other, making it more difficult to fight back when their school goes on the chopping block.

Standardized testing also acts as a way to maintain ideological control of the student body. The bosses push their ideology with every exam they publish, complete with nationalism, racism and anti-communism. Events such as Nat Turner's slave rebellion are never mentioned. The complex history surrounding World War II is boiled down to the U.S. and its allies liberating Europe, and the Russian winter beating the Nazis. The truth that the Soviet Red Army lost tens of millions to smash the fascists is never mentioned. Teachers often have to choose between teaching the bosses' lies or teaching reality at the risk of having their students fail the exams.

School to Prison Pipeline

We also discussed the prison pipeline many of our schools have become. The number of men and women incarcerated in the U.S. has risen to 2,400,000. The sight of dozens of cops in school lobbies, metal detectors, and kids in handcuffs are a growing sight all over NYC, where there are 5,200 School Safety Agents alone.

The purpose of the School is not only to help teachers and students understand our current situation, but also provide an image of where we communists want to take education. To do this, the participants read a report by William H. Chamberlain, a journalist working in Moscow in the 1930s, on the state of Soviet education. The differences in teaching style, organization and form were striking. In Moscow, "...the pupils receive tasks in each subject, requiring from a week to a month for completion. They are then left free to carry out these tasks as they see fit... Sometimes the teacher was in the room, sometimes not, but the students were left almost entirely to their own resources." Multiple-choice tests were absent from Soviet schools, for the educators then knew that "marks are proverbially an unreliable gauge of students' ability" and it was more important to develop a student's critical thinking, interests and personality rather than hammer in the rules of grammar and punctuation.

Education was not limited to the schoolhouse either. Classes would be conducted in factories, in peasant collectives, in office buildings. In the Soviet Union, the working class received a quality education. Despite all the capitalist ideas within socialism that prevented it from ever advancing to communism, all young people were entitled to a thorough education.

The Soviet's anti-sexist, anti-racist education system created tens of thousands of chemists, doctors, engineers, and anti-fascist soldiers, all of whom were also trained in politics, philosophy and literature. The development of workers who can not only read, write and calculate, but also analyze and critique for the benefit of society as a whole, is the foundation of communism. That's the world PLP is fighting for. Join Us!🇺🇸

Sandy Survivors Expose 'Red Cross Double Cross'

NEWYORK CITY, January 16 — "Red Cross, Double Cross. Red Cross, Double Cross" chanted Sandy survivors and supporters, including Progressive Labor Party members and friends, as they picketed the New York City headquarters of the Red Cross for the second time. Five weeks ago, Far Rockaway evacuees whom we had met at a shelter had been placed in Manhattan and Queens hotels with no funds for food, clothes, or other supplies. After demonstrating at the Red Cross, assistance was obtained for one month. Now it had run out and people were desperate.

In all its ads to raise money, the Red Cross claims to help Sandy survivors. In reality very little of the money raised goes to help the working-class victims and survivors. Much of the money remains in the Red Cross coffers and pays the salaries and perks of administrators. One of the former heads of the Red Cross is Elizabeth Dole, wife of former U.S. presidential contender Bob Dole.

During our action, several Red Cross spokespeople told us no more aid would be forthcoming. "We already helped you enough, we don't do housing," they said. However, after this hard-hearted statement showed up on several TV stations, the red-faced Red Cross had second thoughts, and some victims did begin receiving monetary and housing aid.

Two and a half months after the devastation caused by Sandy, there are still at least 3,500 families in hotels in New York and New Jersey and 800 single adults living in fleabag hotels and single room occupancies. FEMA, New York State, New York City, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and other "non-profit" agencies are still shuffling them like a deck of used cards among shelters, hotels and motels. Families are being promised apartments in City Housing, but none have yet been moved. Low-income apartments listed on FEMA's website turn out not to be available to FEMA applicants.

The Sandy survivors we know and their children are now in hotels and motels in Queens and Manhattan. They have been promised a) assistance in finding affordable housing and medical care, since they are unable to get to their regular medical facility,

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Bosses' Racist Legal System Gun Aimed at Working Class

A Brooklyn, NY church held a forum on the issues related to the mass incarceration of black and Latino youth and workers. It was a follow-up to reading Michelle Alexander's widely read book *The New Jim Crow*. Over 100 people heard a panel of community leaders and activists present their experiences with the realities of this systematic, racist attack on black and Latino communities.

In short, with the excuse of a "war on drugs," the bosses set in place a system of what seems like "colorblind" laws such as the Rockefeller Drug Laws, mandatory sentencing, and policing methods like Stop-and-Frisk and community policing. But, because these policing tactics are carried out almost exclusively in black and Latin communities, the racist outcome is many thousands of people being terrorized, arrested and fed into the criminal justice system.

Once in the system, the racist application of the Rockefeller Laws, mandatory sentencing and the unchallenged discretion of the prosecutor, hand most of these defendants outrageous prison terms. In many cases, these are minor infractions for which a white person wouldn't even get a reprimand.

A panelist that helps felons re-establish their lives after prison discussed the hardships encountered after release. The stigma of "felon," the new codeword for race identity, results in a lifetime of racist discrimination. Employers, landlords, lending agencies and government programs use the "felon" status to deny jobs, housing, loans and government assistance. How can anyone survive like this? It's no wonder 66 percent of ex-felons return to jail within three years.

Another panelist, a Harlem woman, described numerous acts of police harassment and brutality. Many residents, especially males, are repeatedly harassed by Stop-and-Frisk tactics. One heinous police action forced children in a public play area to stand line-up style as a bright light was shined in their eyes so that a pick-pocket victim might recognize the criminal. This would never happen or be tolerated in more affluent areas.

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Cuomo's Hospital Closures: A Life-and-Death Battle



Up to thousand workers rally to fight Brooklyn hospital closings.

ALBANY, NY, January 8 — Nearly 1,000 workers rallied here in a fight to prevent the closing of Downstate Hospital, stop layoffs and preserve patient services. Rising at 4:00 a.m., they used a vacation day to board buses from Brooklyn to the State Capital. Black and Latino women workers led the way, bringing family and friends.

The closing or privatization of this hospital, which serves central Brooklyn's predominantly black and Latino population where healthcare needs are the highest, is a racist and sexist attack. It will ultimately take patient lives and cause the death of their community. Already 400 layoffs and the threat of many more to come are devastating these workers and patient care. Actually privatization has already begun. Outsourced non-union cleaners are replacing those laid off.

Hundreds of fists in the air in that usually quiet State legislative palace signified workers' commitment

to struggle. The facts were stated clearly, such as Downstate cares for 400,000 very needy patients annually; 15,000 petitions collected by workers and their allies told Governor Cuomo the facts, but he ignores them. He's been planning healthcare cuts for several years.

He appointed a Wall Street tycoon, Steven Berger, to lead a commission — which includes two leaders of Service Employees International Union's 1199 Healthcare Workers East — to deconstruct healthcare in Brooklyn.

Cuomo's plan, mirroring similar cuts around the U.S., takes away gains in job security and healthcare that workers have won from struggles in the 1930s, '40s and '60s. The bosses' success in eroding health care here will spread.

The pro-capitalist misleaders of the State AFL-CIO and the head of the State's Civil Service Employees

Need Unity + Red Ideas

Reports are flying that Cuomo may be planning to close Long Island College Hospital (LICH) rather than Downstate, dividing the workers at these recently merged hospitals. Both have suffered layoffs already and both will see more cuts. The real battle is not Downstate vs. LICH but rather to develop a united community of patients, students and workers who need more affordable healthcare. Developing this unity, combined with communist ideas, can prepare workers for the only solution for our class: building a mass Progressive Labor Party to finish off this capitalist system once and for all, replacing it with a communist society run by and for the working class.

Association (representing hundreds of thousands of NY State workers) refuse to lead a real offensive against these cuts. A massive fight could marshal support in our communities and might keep hospitals open. Instead of a plan of action all we got was a pep talk and prayers.

Many workers were frustrated by this show and complained, "Or else what?" and "Where's the punch?" Some of us tried to start a chant "Occupy Downstate!" The potential energy of the aroused workers was deflated by the union mis-leaders, ministers and politicians.

Progressive Labor Party is committed to leading a militant class struggle to keep Downstate open, return laid-off workers to their jobs and to fight for healthcare services for all. But we also know that a system based on profits first and workers last won't create jobs and provide decent healthcare. It has to go.

The bosses who control this system aren't concerned with our health or other needs. They're locked in competition with their capitalist rivals abroad. They aim to divert funds for healthcare to finance wars that they hope will maintain their domination of the world's resources and the exploitation of the international working class.

Their system is geared to keep the lion's share of the world's wealth for the capitalists who own it and will always sacrifice our needs to that end. We need to develop leadership to build an egalitarian communist world in which society is organized to meet the needs of all workers.✊

Philly Workers Indict Hospital Bosses' 'Slave Thing'

PHILADELPHIA, January 28 — "The bosses got this slave thing going on," a Philadelphia hospital worker complains. She observes that supervisors are more disrespectful and quick to write up workers for insubordination. Then there's the two-tier wage system and biometric testing brought in by the contract in July 2012, which are used to divide workers.

Another hospital worker noticed that the bosses at their hospital are hiring many new inexperienced workers, especially nurses. These new workers more readily follow supervisors' orders to do work in other workers' job descriptions. Meanwhile older, more experienced workers are more frequently harassed. And everyone is being overworked.

Thousands of years of civilization, decades of union fights — so why do we still have this slavery going on? The answer is capitalism. Only communist revolution can abolish this wage slavery because only communism abolishes classes and wages. The whole point of capitalism is wage slavery for the working class to generate the greatest

profits for the bosses.

Under capitalism the rich bosses use state power, the government, to rule the working class. Racism and sexism are necessary to generate superprofits for the bosses. Communism means that the working class holds state power and runs society. Communism is the only way to organize society without wage slaves or slaves of any kind.

Capitalism also creates profit wars as competing bosses fight for resources and markets. To pay for these wars and to discipline the workers the bosses need fascism, a more open dictatorship by the capitalists. Any workers' "legal rights" are abolished. Workers' wages, benefits, living standards and "rights" are destroyed. Fascism is the scientific name for this type of slavery. The bosses need an obedient working class to accept a poverty living standard and to fight their wars.

The two-tier wage system and biometric testing in the Philly hospitals are a part of fascism. A two-tier wage system obviously means greater profits

for the bosses while bringing new workers' wages down further toward poverty wages — like it was before the union! The biometric testing means that workers must agree to a health screen. If they refuse they must pay a penalty of paying more money for their health benefits.

Many workers rightfully suspect biometric testing is a ploy to sneak in drug and alcohol testing on everyone. Other workers think it may be a good idea because it would compel people to get medical treatment for their untreated health problems. "Some of us are walking time bombs!" as one worker said.

The biometric testing however not only opens the door to drug testing all workers but also attacks all workers with health problems, which is tied to living under capitalism. Many workers suffer from diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, respiratory and cardiac issues, anxiety, depression and drug addiction.

Capitalism fosters these diseases

through the production and marketing of unhealthy foods that generate the greatest profits, promoting smoking, alcohol, drugs and other unhealthy life styles. It's stressful just to live in this damn system. The biometric testing penalizes the very workers that capitalism victimizes.

There's only one way to end this slavery once and for all: the working class must destroy capitalism with communist revolution. On the day-to-day level, this means that the Philadelphia hospital workers who read PLP's CHALLENGE newspaper should distribute it to more and more workers. Study groups should be formed. Readers should promote, organize and lead small and large fights against the bosses' attacks. Let's bury this slave system once and for all! ✊

(For more info on PLP in Philly call 267-319-3515.)

PL'ers Join Fight vs. Israeli Apartheid, Racist Evictions

ISRAEL-PALESTINE, January 12 — More than two dozen working-class supporters, both Jewish and international, came to show solidarity with three of the so-called “unrecognized” villages in the Negev. Two PL'ers joined this important fight against apartheid and racist evictions and demolitions in the south.

Approximately 150,000 Bedouins live in the Negev, the vast majority in the “Siag” area — a tiny reservation between the city of Beersheba and the towns of Omer and Dimona. Before the state of Israel was established in 1948, Bedouins lived in the entire Negev (which is 60% of Israel-Palestine’s land) and had their own, pre-capitalist system of tribal land ownership. The majority of Bedouins were deported from the Negev between 1947 and 1959, and the rest were forced to re-settle in the Siag area.

Farmers Become Proletarians

Until 1967 they, like all Arabs under Israeli rule, lived under martial law and their movement was strictly limited. In the 1960’s, the Israeli government decided to settle the Bedouins, formerly semi-nomadic herders and farmers, in dense state-planned towns. One reason for this move was to remove the Bedouin peasantry from its ancestral land and give that land over to the state for the benefit of the Zionist movement and its rich U.S. and Western European backers.

Another reason was to try to give the Bedouins no other option than being wage-laborers in the service of Israeli bosses.

Faced with this kind of racist state terror and land theft, the villagers are organizing a struggle for land and livelihood.

Today, half of the entire Bedouin population in the Negev lives in seven (mis-)planned towns, where there are no jobs and where crime, unemployment and drugs are common. The rest live in villages without infrastructure such as proper running water, sewage or electricity, and without services such as healthcare or schooling. They usually have to make do with generators and improvised wells and travel for long distances to get to a hospital or a school.

They are faced with two devastating options: if they leave their ancestral land, the state will most likely confiscate it. But if they move to the “planned towns,” they will suffer from chronic unemployment, as against eking out a living as small-time herders in the “unrecognized” villages.

Zionist Land Takeover

Ninety-three percent of the land inside the “green line” is owned by the State of Israel and managed through the National Fund (JNF) and the Israel Land Administration, both of which have strong Zionist agendas and racist outlooks. The JNF likes to present itself as an “ecological” organization working on “flowering up the wilderness”; in reality, its job is to make sure that the land can only be used by the state of Israel and the wealthy U.S. real-estate tycoons, such as Ronald Lauder, who wish to exploit it.

The first visit in our trip was to the Bedouin village of Bir Hadaj. Since 1904, the Bedouin villagers held title to the

land but in the mid 1970’s they were moved by the state far away. In the 1990’s, the villagers were promised five dunams (approximately 1.25 acres) of land per nuclear family for both housing and agricultural use.

The government, however, soon broke its word and said it will only give 2.5 dunams (approximately 0.75 acres) to each family, and, finally, only one dunam (approximately one quarter of an acre). All this was done while rich farmers with the “right” connections to government officials received thousands of acres in “individual farms” from the state, free of charge or for a paltry sum. There are no jobs to be found in the vicinity of Bir Hadaj, so agriculture is the main source of livelihood available to the Bedouins there, and without much land they are doomed to poverty.

The villagers protested against the state’s plan of turning Bir Hadaj into a de facto town with no agriculture or jobs to be found. Since they objected to the state plan, there is no official plan for Bir Hadaj, and, consequently, no way at all for the Bedouins to be granted building permits for their homes. The state uses this as an excuse to demolish the village homes, usually with much police brutality in the process, in order to apply pressure on the villagers and force them to accept the urbanization plan.

Racist State Terror

Faced with this kind of racist state terror and land theft, the villagers have joined forces with supporters of all ethnicities from throughout Israel-Palestine, and are organizing a struggle for land and livelihood.



After Bir Hadaj, we visited the unrecognized village of Wadi al-Naam. The Israeli state, coveting the village’s lands, has allowed chemical factories and even a power plant to be built there in order to force the villagers to leave. Villagers are poisoned by both air pollution from the turbines and electromagnetic radiation from the generators and power lines. Wadi al-Naam has the highest cancer rate in all of Israel-Palestine.

The state has offered to move the Wadi al-Naam villagers to the nearby (mis-)planned town of Segev Shalom, which is not only stricken with intense unemployment, but also, like Wadi al-Naam, the same deadly pollution. Other re-settlement ideas proposed by the villagers were rejected by the state.

We finished our tour in the village of al-Araqueeb, next to the (mis-)planned

town of Rahat and close to Beersheba, which was demolished no less than 42 times (!) by the Israeli state in the last two and a half years. Again, the villagers hold title to their land, but this does not interest the JNF and the government. They speak all the time about how they protect “private property” — but care only about the property of the rich.

This visit highlighted the horrors of Zionist apartheid, where Bedouin workers and peasants may serve in the army and pay taxes, but are thrown off their land and rarely get a decent job. There is no capitalism without racism, not in Israel-Palestine and not in the rest of the world. But we, workers and peasants of all ethnicities and nations, have each other to rely on when we fight back against racism, land theft and capitalism. And we will eventually win!✪

EL Salvador: PLP Combats History of Military Dictators

EL SALVADOR — Since 1927, 14 families have “democratically” dominated El Salvador through military dictators. There have been many elections in El Salvador’s history, elections in which the military candidates always won while the opposition was always killed or exiled.

The capitalist class in El Salvador follows imperialist orders, especially from the U.S. The current ruling class, who in the past posed as revolutionaries, have proven to be traitors to the workers.

The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) rules for the bosses. Our conditions worsen every day due to unemployment, low wages and murders by the Maras (gangs) and the rulers’ death squads.

For example, in San Sebastian Salitrillo in the state of Santa Ana, five FMLN councilmen have been accused of money laundering. Just like Mayor Francisco Castañeda, all of them have become wealthy with public money. But they authorize budget cuts in health and education.

The Progressive Labor Party has developed a base here. We are organizing communist schools with the working class to win them to understand that we must destroy these capitalist leeches and their cronies. Our goal is for PLP to spread from east to west. That’s why we recruit new readers of CHALLENGE, which reflects our class struggles worldwide. The bosses’ newspapers only report the lies and crimes that the bosses themselves make.

Our base continues to grow among workers, peasants and students here. Although it is a small country, it has a great revolutionary tradition. However, without communist leadership, these struggles have always turned reformist. Our goal is to give these schools a real communist character. Only PLP has the alternative of communist politics, which can free us from capitalist oppression — destroyer of workers and peasants. Only working-class unity organized by PLP can smash this fascist system.✪

‘Red Cross Double Cross’

continued from page 3

b) accessible schools for their children, and c) financial assistance and case workers to help them navigate through the myriad of red tape.

They have received promise after promise, nearly all of which have proven meaningless. Instead the politicians and “non-profits” are paying hundreds of dollars per night per family for one hotel room. This benefits the corporate hotel owners who can keep their hotels full and the money flowing even when the tourists are not there. Of course there are NO cooking facilities in these rooms. In most cases even the normal microwaves and refrigerators are removed before the survivors are allowed into the rooms. Therefore, all food must be bought ready-to-eat which, especially in midtown Manhattan, is impossible on any working-class income.

But these survivors and their friends are uniting and fighting back. This demonstration at the Red Cross was part of an ongoing struggle, including actions at FEMA and other government offices. We must unite the struggles of Sandy survivors, striking school bus drivers and matrons and all members of the working class. The politicians and the billionaires they serve are terrified of our unity.. They use racism, sexism, religion, and nationalism to keep us divided. We, the working class, are many and when united we are strong. With our unity we can continue our struggles. More importantly, we can build a revolution to destroy this entire system of capitalism where the handful of billionaires live off our blood, sweat and tears. We can build a communist world of collectivity and sharing run by the working class.✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Mass Struggle in India Shows PLP Need to Intensify Anti-Sexist Fight

The millions of women and men in India who are waging a mass struggle against rape are taking a courageous stand against one of the most brutal aspects of capitalism. When they took to the streets protesting the gang rape and torture of a female college student, they were attacked and arrested by the corrupt cops and politicians who back sexist violence every day. The protesters kept up the struggle, though, even spreading it to other countries, in the face of deep-seated racist and religious support for long-standing sexist practices. They deserve our support.

But they didn't get it in the last issue of CHALLENGE, where the struggle was placed on the back page with just a photo, a short caption, and a call for them to join PLP. Such offhand treatment of a mass struggle against sexism is the opposite of what's called for — it's not they who should join us, but we who should join them, and call for supporting their struggle wherever we're organizing. They're in the forefront here, taking a stand against deeply entrenched attacks on women, that goes beyond rape to include female infanticide, child marriage, forced sex trafficking, and grinding exploitation of women workers.

We need to bring a class analysis to this struggle, since capitalism is the root cause of sexist violence, and reserves the worst for female workers. But when women — and men — are facing water cannons demanding an end to sexist attacks, it's dismissive to see it simply as a call to build our organization. It would have been far more constructive to give this struggle deeper coverage and say we fight for a society where that kind of brutality is wiped out, and we stand with the anti-sexist fighters in their struggle. That the article on the mass anti-rape struggle didn't do so shows that as an organization we need to sharpen the fight against sexism, and the place to start is by giving our support to the women and men attacking sexist brutality in India and around the world.

Communist Organizing Against Sexist Violence

Editor's Note: We do need a class analysis of India's anti-sexist struggle. Such an analysis would include that sexism cannot be defeated under capitalism. Calling on workers to join PLP is understanding that the working class needs a Party to lead such a war, and today that party is PLP. The responsibility of waging an anti-sexist struggle and writing about it in CHALLENGE is on all members. We should lead solidarity demonstrations on the job and the campuses in each city. Onwards, comrades.

Lincoln: History Taught from the Top Down

The following review of the film *Lincoln* was produced by the New York City PLP Culture Committee for discussion and response within the Party:

Almost 700,000 people were killed during the Civil War, the bloodiest war in the U.S. And before 1861 the issue of slavery was debated and fought for over 250 years — not only with words — in courtrooms and state houses, the Underground Railroad, in 400 slave rebellions, Bleeding Kansas and in the attack on Harper's Ferry led by John Brown, which sparked the Civil War.

Lincoln builds the story that the slaves were ultimately freed by a group of white politicians bribing a few lame duck Democrats in Congress. It's a gripping movie, well acted and engrossing, but in the end it only reinforces the idea that history is really made from the top down. The movie sends a seemingly inspired but ultimately cynical and passive message. It's the opposite of what's needed to encourage fighting racism and the excesses of capitalism.

The movie deals with Lincoln's efforts to pass the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, banning slavery. As the movie portrays it, Lincoln thought it essential to pass the amendment before the end of the war, since he felt the Emancipation Proclamation wouldn't have any legal standing after the war. As a film, it's almost like watching a thriller, hanging on each scene to see who will get on board, who will sell out, how they'll vote. Through a lot of persuasion, arguing, back-room deals and bribes (you mean politicians can actually be bought?), he and his agents muster just enough votes to get the Amendment passed.

But what it doesn't say is as important as what it does. The movie inspires more talk about Lincoln's personality than the fight against slavery. There are

some gripping scenes that graphically show the brutality of the war, but they punctuate a film that's mostly dialogue. The deals and diplomacy might have taken place. But what really ended slavery was the bloody defeat of the Confederate army, due in no small measure to the almost 200,000 black soldiers who enlisted, and to the growing hatred of slavery and slave-owners during the war (not that racism didn't persist). The movie's backhanded racism and elitism ignores the real mass struggle.

For a film that deals with freeing black slaves the movie is dominated by white characters. There are sympathetic, articulate and principled black characters in the movie. One black corporal even argues with Lincoln about unfair treatment of black soldiers in the Union army. But they're bit parts, and are one-dimensionally portrayed. Historians Eric Foner and Kate Masur have criticized the movie for the lack of more developed black characters, for omitting key fighters like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, and for pushing the idea that the defeat of slavery took place by white men making deals in back rooms. (Harriet Tubman participated in planning the Harper's Ferry Raid and recruiting people for it, but illness prevented her from getting there.)

But of course this is how we're taught history; that Lincoln freed the slaves. Missing are the decades of struggle by the abolitionists, Underground Railroad, slave revolts, and the war itself. So-called "serious" Hollywood "historical" movies like *Lincoln*, *Amistad*, *Schindler's List*, *The Help*, *Platoon*, *Mississippi Burning*, *Glory*, *The Patriot*, *Dances with Wolves*, all serve a purpose — so people come out of the theater



recognizing past oppression, but feeling the system isn't as bad as it used to be, and can be reformed for the better.

This film is being pushed hard by Hollywood, playing in 1,200 theaters, grossing over \$140 million, sure to win several Oscars and to be shown in schoolrooms for years to come. But the film wouldn't have been made, much less pushed, if it didn't have a message for what's going on today. They want to win people to the ideas that nothing can get done without cynical compromise; that this is what it takes to reform capitalism; and that our job is just to vote for people who can get the job done, so "cut Obama some slack; this is what he has to deal with."

It's useful to see this movie in order to discuss it with our friends. It isn't often a Hollywood film enables discussion about struggle, history and racism. But let's not get sucked in. History taught from the ground up, not the top down, would have a very different portrayal of the abolition of slavery.

Cultural Committee

Back the Bus Strikers!



continued from front page

enthusiastically from the strike's first day when a group of high school teachers and students marched up to the picket line chanting, "Same Struggle, Same Fight! Workers and Students must Unite!" Each time we joined the line, the strikers cheered our group for the solidarity we brought to them. We were quickly made to feel welcome by this international, multiracial group of men and women who, in many instances, have worked for decades in the student transport industry.

As the strikers clapped for us, we in turn clapped for them and told them their willingness to fight back helped all workers, ourselves included. This led to a good discussion of the current period. Those of us who are retired pointed out that the bosses, especially Governor Cuomo, have been threatening to get rid of pensions, so eventually we'll all be under the gun. In small groups and in one-to-one discussions, we all agreed that throughout the U.S. there's a general attack by bosses on our class.

We've distributed CHALLENGE each day that we picket and asked the workers what they thought we should write about the strike in upcoming editions.

Many were angry about attacks on them by the media and politicians. They said reporters came to do interviews but turned off their tape recorders when strikers didn't say what the reporters wanted to hear. One worker was furious that billionaire Bloomberg — who violated the term-limits law to buy a third term — was saying the strike was illegal. We've had lots of opportunities to discuss communism and why we think class struggle is a necessity but that revolution is what all workers need worldwide.

Support the Strike; Stop the Scabs!

Many strikers are awaiting a decision by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to see what direction the strike might take. But, of course, the NLRB is notorious for taking the bosses' side.

We in PLP call on the entire international working class — union members, employed and unemployed, and students — to support these workers by raising money, getting support resolutions passed in their organizations, joining the picket lines, bringing food and coffee to the strikers and, most important, bringing revolutionary communist ideas to the struggle.✱

Modern Language Association Convention

PL'ers Put Communism on the Agenda

BOSTON, MA, January 6 — Members of PLP active in the Modern Language Association (MLA), along with friends in the Radical Caucus, helped to bring communism and class struggle to the 2013 MLA convention here.

Party members gave papers on various facets of literary radicalism: the role played by communists in the proletarian and post-colonial literary movements; speculation about post-class society in literary works focusing on racism and sexism; debates over the “idea of communism” in current political theory. The current economic crisis, along with the dire job market faced by many humanities scholars and teachers, has many MLA members querying the legitimacy of capitalism. PL members contributed to a sharpening of the discussion and distributed significantly more CHALLENGES than we have in the past.

The activist core of the Party’s work here for years has centered on motions and resolutions raised by the Radical Caucus. One of this year’s initiatives focused on the need for serious data gathering on the wages and working conditions of part-time and adjunct faculty, who teach about 75 percent of college-level humanities courses, for as little as \$1,500 per course, with no benefits. The other urged the MLA to condemn the so-called Pathways project at the City University of New York (CUNY). This project overrules faculty governance in an effort to cut costs and exert tighter control over curriculum.

Those in power don’t care that this policy produces inferior education — science courses without labs, writing and language courses with reduced contact

hours. Students disadvantaged by the curricular changes are overwhelmingly immigrant, black, Latino, and Asian. Teachers who have opposed Pathways have been threatened with dismissal.

Discussion and debate over the CUNY resolution revealed that Pathways is funded by the Lumina Corporation and the Gates Foundation, both ruling-class efforts to privatize and corporatize public higher education. These efforts are widespread: members of the Delegate Assembly spoke passionately about the capitalist profiteering and authoritarian ideological repression occurring on dozens of campuses around the U.S. and Canada.

Both Radical Caucus initiatives were passed with overwhelming majorities. Several people joined the Radical Caucus, and one delegate, new to the Radical Caucus, helped to fight for passage of the opposing Pathways resolution. While this support was gratifying, our level of success made PL’ers and friends aware that we need to push harder for a stronger anti-capitalist analysis in the measures brought before the Delegate Assembly.

The annual Radical Caucus meeting was large and spirited, with several young new members offering to take leadership in framing the sessions and activities for the 2014 convention. Featured next year will be more discussion of “alternatives to capitalism,” as well as of universities as sites of ruling-class ideology. Onward!☺

Bosses’ Racist Legal System

continued from page 3

Why is this happening? Who benefits? Some panelists answered: Prisons are big business. In some places, prisons are the biggest or only employer in economically strapped towns. Industries use prison labor and pay them almost nothing, thus making bigger profits. The federal government gives law enforcement agencies military equipment and financial incentives to fight the “drug war” in the inner cities; the more they arrest, the more they get, including confiscated stuff.

All this is true, but one panelist hit it home: capitalism needs class distinctions and segregation to control the working class; to keep the working class from uniting and fighting back. The bosses need scapegoats like black and Latino youth and undocumented immigrants to blame for the misery we suffer under capitalism. The bosses need unemployed workers to keep the wages of all workers down.

Several reform solutions were offered, like putting more money into education, job training, housing, better mental health services and childhood intervention. But we’ve heard this before. These reforms are not the solution. We need to work for multiracial unity in the working class, build PLP and build for revolution to throw off the chains of capitalism.☺



RED EYE ON THE NEWS

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

Nukes kill civilians, don’t win wars

NYT, 1/14 — Leaving aside the morality of America’s decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, new research by historian Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and other scholars shows that Japan surrendered not because of the atomic bomb but because the Soviets...joined the war. Sixty-six Japanese cities had already been destroyed by conventional weapons — two more did not make the difference. Attributing surrender to the bomb was also convenient for Japan’s leaders, allowing them to blame defeat on a “miracle” weapon....

Mass destruction doesn’t win wars; killing soldiers does. No war has ever been won simply by killing civilians. The 1941-44 siege of Leningrad didn’t deter Soviet leaders from pressing the fight against Hitler. Nor did the firebombing of Dresden force Germany to submit.

Surprise! Poverty causes big debts

NYT, 1/15 — The usual explanations for reckless borrowing focus on people’s character, or social norms that promote free spending and instant gratification. But recent research has shown that scarcity by itself was enough to cause this kind of financial [sabotage].

“When we put people in situations of scarcity, they get into poverty traps,” said Eldar Shafir, a professor of psychology and public affairs at Princeton. “They borrow at high interest rates that hurt them, in ways they knew to avoid when there was less scarcity.”

The psychological burden of debt not only saps intellectual resources, it also reinforces reckless behavior, and quickly.... The average debt for households earning \$20,000 a year or less...doubled to \$26,000 between 2001 and 2010....

People dig deeper precisely because they long to escape.

Workers will rally to their class

GW, 1/11 — In praise of the Fukushima 50:

On 14 March 2011, as the Fukushima nuclear plant went up in flames, 750 workers were evacuated. But 50 stayed behind to try to prevent the station from going into total meltdown. As the hours ticked by, they were joined by other employees of the Tokyo Electric Power Co. from across the country, as well as firefighters, engineers and soldiers. The group referred to as the Fukushima 50 actually encompasses hundreds of workers who tried to stop the disaster growing even larger. They did so despite the deaths of two colleagues, despite the injuries to more than 20 others, and despite the very real risk of radiation poisoning....

Congress rated below cockroaches

NYT, 1/15 — About a dozen members of Congress gathered in a Midtown Manhattan hotel ballroom on Monday, an intentional remove from the marbled corridors of the United States Capitol, to chew over some uncomfortable questions. Why are we so ineffective? Why can’t we manage....And why does America hate us?....

[A poll shows] “Congress is now rated...below cockroaches and colonoscopies....”

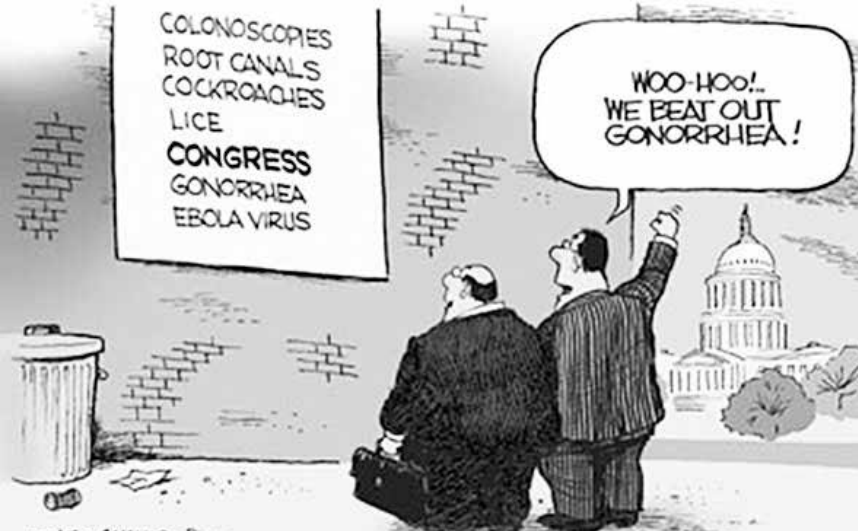
Representative Peter Welch, Democrat of Vermont, bemoaned how each party ignores the truth when it does not suit its purpose. “Congress is a fact-free zone,” he declared.

For-profit hospitals can hurt health

NYT, 1/9 — Thirty years ago,...the School of Pharmacy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison discovered an interesting pattern in the use of sedatives at nursing homes in the south of the state.

Patients entering church-affiliated non-profit homes were prescribed drugs roughly as often as

According to a recent popularity poll (no joke)...



those entering “proprietary” institutions. But patients in proprietary homes received, on average, more than four times the dose of patients as non-profits....

The economist Burton Weisbrod provided a straightforward explanation: “differences in the pursuit of profit.” Sedatives are cheap, Mr. Weisbrod noted. “Less expensive than, say, giving special attention to... patients who need it....”

This behavior was hardly surprising. Hospitals run for profit are also less likely than nonprofit and government-run institutions to offer services like home health care and psychiatric emergency care, which are not as profitable as open-heart surgery....

One study found that patients’ mortality rates spiked when nonprofit hospitals switched to become profit-making,.... Handing over responsibility for social goals to private enterprise is providing us with social goods of lower quality, distributed more inequitably....

Gambling is mainly a tax on the poor

GW, 1/11 — More than £5bn (\$8bn) was gambled on high-stakes gambling machines in northern English cities and London boroughs with high levels of unemployment last year — four times the amount bet in richer rural areas in southern England....

The figures...appear to show that bookmakers have targeted the poorest areas with the highest unemployment and poverty....

“It’s a business model which sucks money from the poorest communities.”

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PLP.ORG

MALI: IMPERIALIST INVADERS SEEK URANIUM, OIL, GOLD

The U.S.-backed French invasion of Mali with its 15 million people is geared to strip this country of its vast natural resources while hiding behind the Bush “war-on-terror” label. They use this label in the hope that it will generate unquestioning support for whatever the imperialists do in its name. This racist attack on innocent workers is occurring in the eighth nation in four years alone in which Western regimes are killing Muslims.

French bosses have a long history of colonization in Mali, having also established military bases in neighboring Niger, Chad and Burkina. So far they have sent in 4,000 troops equipped with armored vehicles, helicopter gunships and 40 airplanes which bombed Northern Mali. They hope for 5,800 more forces from other African capitalist countries.

Initially the air attacks killed 11 civilians, including three children who drowned as they fled into a river trying to escape the bombs, as well as other workers and their families in or near their homes, said the mayor of Konna. He fled the town with his family, reporting “significant infrastructure damage” (News Beacon, Ireland, 1/15). The bombings have displaced an estimated 30,000 people.

This flies in the face of a promise by French Socialist (read capitalist) president François Hollande who said “France would never be in the front line but would only provide logistical aid, without fighting” (le Canard enchaîné, 1/23). It also violates the 1995 agreement with Mali on technical military “cooperation” which stipulated that “French soldiers cannot participate in the preparation and execution of war operations” (Canard, 1/23). But, of course, imperialist neo-colonialists regard such “agreements” as mere scraps of paper.

Still Another War for Obama and U.S. Rulers to Escalate

Obama’s war machine is knee-deep in this French operation. Not only were U.S. rulers “providing intelligence to French forces in Mali” (News Beacon, 1/15) but, “The U.S. military has based a growing number of armed Predator drones as well as F-15 fighter jets at Camp Lemonnier, which has grown into a key installation for secret counterterrorism operations” in the Horn of Africa (Washington Post, 1/14). This is all “part of a more than \$500 million...program to train and equip armies across the Sahara....American Special Forces provided Malian infantry troops with training in marksmanship, border patrol, ambush drills and other skills” (NYT, 1/25).

Furthermore, the past “overthrow of the Malian government [which destabilized the country] was enabled by U.S.-trained-and-armed soldiers.... Commanders of this nation’s elite army units , the fruits of years of careful American training, defected...taking troops, guns, trucks and their newfound skills to the enemy” (NYT, 1/14) It was, “An American-trained officer [who] overthrow Mali’s elected government, setting the stage for more than half of the country to fall into the hands of Islamic extremists” (NYT).

Meanwhile, NATO countries — Canada, Belgium, Denmark and Germany — “have publicly backed the French incursion, pledging logistical support” (News Beacon). Britain has helped transport French troops to Mali and its Prime Minister David Cameron “has led Britain into Mali’s conflict without even a pretense at consultation” (columnist Owen Jones in the British Independent, 1/14).

This invasion has little to do with “terrorism” but rather is based on the usual reason for imperialist adventures: natural resources. Mali is rich in gold (Africa’s third largest producer); diamonds, iron ore, bauxite, manganese, copper, gypsum, phosphate, lead, zinc and lithium. And “Mali’s petroleum potential [is] already attracting significant interests from investors....Mali has stepped up its promotion and research for oil exploration, production and potential exports” (News Beacon). It “could also provide a strategic transport route for Sub-Saharan oil and gas exports through to the Western world” (News Beacon).

Blood for Uranium

The French bosses’ main interest in Mali revolves around uranium whose exploration is now in full swing. Following the 1973 oil shock, French rulers opted for nuclear energy. Its 59 nuclear reactors lead the world. These reactors generate nearly 80 percent of its electricity, making it the world’s largest net electricity exporter. Although Niger has been France’s primary source of uranium, Mali has an estimated 5,200 tons of untapped uranium sources. Malians have set up community organizations in mining areas, protesting the potential environmental degradation and outflow of resources to imperialist beneficiaries.

Much of the instability in Mali stems directly from NATO’s intervention in Libya. The Tuareg people, “who traditionally hailed from northern Mali, made up a large portion of [Muammar Gaddafi’s] army. When Gaddafi was ejected from power, they returned to their homeland, sometimes forcibly so as black Africans came under attack in [‘liberated’] Libya” (British Independent, 1/14) Alongside them, “Heavily armed, battle-hardened Islamic fighters returned from combat in Libya...The big weaponry coming out of Libya and the different, more Islamic fighters who came back” played the precipitating role [along with the Mali troop defections] in the collapse of the U.S.-supported central government” (NYT, 1/14, and British Guardian, 1/14). Blowback with a vengeance.

Obama’s second term has begun by joining newly elected French Socialist/capitalist president Hollande in still another racist/imperialist war spreading across northern Africa. In order to extract valuable natural resources for the profits of French, U.S. and other capitalists, they are killing black workers, much as their racist cops kill black and Latino workers on the streets of big U.S. cities and as French bosses super-exploit black African and Arab immigrant workers in France. Such racist wars are used to try to win masses of French workers to accept austerity in the name of restoring French bosses’ power.

It is only a communist revolution that creates a society run by and for the workers that can end this profit-hungry capitalist hell.☸

Bangladesh: Another Fire, More Sexist Murders = Bosses’ Profits

DHAKA, BANGLADESH, January 27 — Seven young women garment workers were murdered and 50 others were injured yesterday when a deadly fire swept through still another textile factory of mostly women. “When I tried to escape through the emergency exit, I found the gate locked” Raushan Ara told the Prothom Ala newspaper here. Many workers jumped from the second-story windows to try to escape the flames.

The factory lacked the most basic safety standards. “We did not find fire extinguishers. We did not find any safety measures,” a fire department official told the New York Times (1/27).

Several fire victims were teenagers, as young as 15. Bangladesh’s “laws allow teenagers as young as 14 to work” in these factories” (NYT, 1/25).

The Smart Garment Export Company is among the country’s 5,000 clothing factories that manufacture garments for leading Western retailers. This is the 33rd major fire since 2006, which has killed over 700 workers. It follows the November atrocity at Tazreen Fashions that killed 112 workers who manufactured garments for outfits like Wal-mart, the GAP and Sears and are paid as little as \$37 a month. That fire led to millions of workers taking to the streets and strikes that shut down much of the industry for days.

While the government had conducted many high-profile inspections after that fire, they are meaningless given that nothing has changed in this industry for decades. Just since November there have been 18 more fires. Not one factory owner has ever been held responsible for any of the deaths in all 33 major fires.

This country’s \$19 billion textile export industry is the world’s second largest, behind China’s. Its profits are reaped over the dead bodies and slave-labor conditions suffered by its four million mostly women workers, another example of the special oppression that women endure under this system. Workers everywhere should rage in protest to show unity with these garment workers’ struggles.

It is this capitalist drive for maximum profits that is at the root of the exploitation and murders of these women workers. It will continue until workers become part of a mass revolutionary communist party that can start a fire that will sweep the world and extinguish this hellish system. ☸



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